

REPORTER



The Potomac at Roosevelt Island in the District. Water quality assessments that account for local stresses and conditions are important for managing a complex resource.

C. Dalpra

New Projects Build on ICPRB Expertise in 2004

Throughout the watershed, the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) is improving water and related natural resources and the quality of life for basin residents through a wide range of projects that promote better management of resources, provide direct improvements to water quality, and engage basin citizens in those activities.

Living Resources

Several ongoing ICPRB projects increase our understanding of the river's complex biology, restore fish populations, and increase the health and value of living resources for basin residents.

Citizens, local, state, and federal government agencies, and other groups monitor rivers and streams for health in all parts of the basin. Monitoring data has been collected throughout the basin for many years, but there is no standard method for data collection and comparing information from different sources has

been difficult. To bring more data into management decisions, the ICPRB has developed a method for merging data to allow statistically accurate comparisons. In the nontidal Potomac, data collected by its member jurisdictions have been assessed to create a database where the studies can be used together. The database is broken into ecoregions, areas where the ecology, the macroinvertebrates in the streams, and their relative value for expressing the health of the waterway are similar. The three ecoregions in the non-tidal portion of the Potomac basin all support benthic macroinvertebrates, animals that live on the stream bed, as a vital food source for fish. Habitat data was analyzed as well. The habitat quality in the three ecoregions influences the health of the fish and other animals in the waterway.

Similar work has been performed for the basin's tidal segments, which are monitored using different indicators. The risk of algal blooms, hypoxia (low dissolved oxygen),

Our mission is to enhance, protect and conserve the water and associated land resources of the Potomac River and its tributaries through regional and interstate cooperation.

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and the probability for successful submerged aquatic vegetation growth can all be estimated through monitoring. The data can then be used to verify models that help predict future trends in the Potomac and Chesapeake Bay.

Claire Buchanan, an ICPRB aquatic ecologist and co-chair of the Monitoring and Modeling Work Group of the Chesapeake Bay Program Living Resources Subcommittee, has led efforts by the group to improve current models to better characterize the tidal estuaries and the bay. "The lower trophic levels [phytoplankton and zooplankton, food for fish and shellfish] are not accurately represented in current models," said Buchanan. "Inaccurate representation of plankton in the models could result in a compounding error when modeling fish because they depend on plankton to survive," she noted.

The improved models increase understanding of the fisheries that ICPRB has been working to restore in the Potomac River. After eight years of American shad stocking, and the modification of the Little Falls Dam so that fish may swim upstream to spawn, the Living Resources team is monitoring the stock at Great Falls, the natural barrier to migration. Removal of the constructed blockage at Little Falls in 2000 reopened about 10 river miles of excellent spawning and nursery habitat to shad and other migratory fish. The stocking program used the assistance of volunteers, who helped capture spawning shad to collect eggs and milt that were fertilized and grown out in hatcheries and classrooms before release to the river. The Potomac has witnessed very strong spawning runs of shad for the last few years.

This year, ICPRB will again assist the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in restoring American shad in the Rappahannock River, a neighboring bay tributary. Restoration of the Rappahannock requires shad fry from the Potomac to speed the recovery.

River herring restoration also remains a priority. Jim Cummins, associate director of ICPRB's Living Resources Section, said that river herring (alewife, blueback herring) have not been as predictable as their cousins, the American shad. "They tend to spawn after a warm rain event, but we only had one event last year," Cummins said of the egg collection. Herring fry were to be delivered to area schools to grow out as part of a Living Classrooms project in

Spring 2003. However, the lack of eggs delayed the project until this spring.

The Living Resources team will continue to provide technical support and expertise to various projects and will reinforce the efforts to restore and protect the vital living resources and habitats throughout the basin.

Water Resources

The drought conditions from 1999 through 2002 focused attention on the region's water resources, and highlighted the interconnection between ground- and surface-water. The ICPRB is assessing surface and groundwater resources to obtain a comprehensive perspective that will provide guidance on both quantity and quality issues.

Through a joint project, real-time groundwater monitoring wells will allow close observation of groundwater levels by ICPRB and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The study will provide an enhanced picture of groundwater availability, usage, and the interactions of ground- and surface-waters. Groundwater supplies provide the baseflow for streams, and contributes much of the streamwater present during droughts. Congress has provided funds for two years of study.

The ICPRB effort will begin in the Monocacy subwatershed with two pilot projects. Cherie Schultz, ICPRB senior environmental scientist and groundwater project leader, explained that base flow statistics, or statistics on normal surface flow, will be analyzed to estimate the groundwater recharge (the amount of precipitation that soaks into the soil) throughout the Monocacy basin. The groundwater project will be expanded to other areas of the basin in the future, providing assessments of areas where groundwater supplies may become stressed from use or pollution threats.

The groundwater project also will provide information useful for the drought management operations of the ICPRB Section for Cooperative Water Supply Operations on the Potomac (CO-OP).

Schultz and her team will evaluate an enhanced Chesapeake Bay Program watershed model for predicting how groundwater use is impacted during droughts, and in identifying subwatersheds that would be most affected. In turn, the study will be of value to CO-OP drought management operations in more accurately predicting low flow river conditions (based in part on the availability of groundwater) and better managing surface water withdrawals and reservoir releases for the metropolitan area water utilities.

Responsible for ensuring that the Washington metropolitan area utilities can meet their demands without restrictions, CO-OP Section staff will continue to update



ICPRB CO-OP Deputy Director Erik Hagen gives a radio interview while checking the level in a monitoring well near the river. Groundwater is a growing ICPRB focus.

ICPRB's simulation model with 2002 data for the reservoirs and river flow data. The model provides ICPRB with valuable information about fluctuations in the river's flow and the reservoir storage and use based on available historic data. The new data enhance the tools used to provide drought management for the metropolitan area.

The CO-OP Section also will continue its annual drought preparedness exercises with the three major Washington, D.C., metropolitan water utilities (Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Washington Aqueduct Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Fairfax County Water Authority), and the Baltimore District Corps of Engineers, which operates Jennings Randolph Reservoir. This exercise ensures that actual drought operations run smoothly, and provides a way to test new ideas and uncover potential problems in the existing drought management structure.

This year, CO-OP will assess the usefulness of the Chesapeake Bay Program's watershed rainfall and runoff model. Erik Hagen, ICPRB Deputy Director of CO-OP Operations, is hopeful that the watershed model will be useful for evaluating potential impacts of climate change. In its studies of future demand on the Potomac, CO-OP staff have attempted to examine effects of long-term climate change on the availability of water. The CO-OP is assisting in the model's low-flow calibration. "The determining factor of its usefulness will be how well it performs with the low-flow calibrations," said Hagen.

In December 2003, the region was once again reminded of the importance of the water supply in a Supreme Court decision to allow Virginia to withdraw water from the Potomac without a permit from Maryland, which owns the mainstem Potomac to the mean low-water mark on the Virginia shore. While there are no apparent short-term impacts from the change, continued use of

the river to meet growing demands will require greater coordination among the states in the future. The ICPRB will encourage member states to cooperate in water resources planning and permitting, based on CO-OP's successes in the metropolitan area.

Water Quality

The ICPRB contributes to water quality improvements by assisting in total maximum daily load (TMDL) work, providing water suppliers with information in case of contamination, participating in the Chesapeake Bay Program's work groups, and many other research tasks.

The ICPRB continues to assist basin states through development of water quality models in the basin. The TMDLs identify the quantity of a contaminant that a waterway is able to absorb while maintaining the designated uses of the waterway, and how contaminants can be reduced to meet those uses. Previous TMDL work in the District of Columbia and Maryland portions of the Anacostia watershed are essentially complete, along with work on the plan for Goose Creek in Virginia. The ICPRB currently is assessing several projects in the basin.

Improved data and methods makes for more accurate models on which to base TMDLs and other water quality improvement efforts. The commission is working under a grant from the Maryland Department of the Environment to improve understanding of sediment and nutrient loads in the Potomac watershed through development of the Phase 5 Watershed Model. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Chesapeake Bay Program will use the enhanced model to help guide restoration efforts. "The Phase 5 Watershed Model is a useful tool for estimating pollutants to the bay, but must be modified for use in the Potomac," said ICPRB Senior Environmental Scientist Ross Mandel. The ICPRB is one of several agencies whose work will help enhance the model for use throughout the bay watershed. The work is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

The ICPRB also updated its Toxic Spill Model, designed to estimate travel times from upriver spills to the water supply intakes on the river. "The revised model has a completely new code, with added graphical output, an enhanced ability to model sewage spills, the ability to estimate concentrations of non-conservative substances, such as pathogens or volatile material, and can rapidly evaluate different spill scenarios," said Carlton Haywood, associate director of ICPRB's Water Quality section. "The spill model is an important asset for assisting the regional water utilities in their efforts to share the Potomac's resources, and will continue to be refined."

Upriver spills, sediment, and nutrients



C. Dalpra

ICPRB will again help sponsor the Potomac River Sojourn. Last year's event began on the Anacostia.

from the Potomac affect the Chesapeake Bay, and ICPRB staff stay closely involved in aspects of the bay cleanup through membership on several committees and work groups. As the bay's second-largest tributary, the Potomac's health is critical to the bay's, and ICPRB staff efforts benefit both waterways. Staff involvement keeps the Potomac well-represented in the bay cleanup, both on technical efforts and through coordination with many citizens and other groups working on state tributary strategies.

Education and Outreach

Education and outreach efforts are vital to the public's understanding of Potomac and bay issues. The ICPRB serves as an information hub for the region through outreach projects, its website, and the *Potomac Basin Reporter*.

Additionally, ICPRB will help Pennsylvania in 2004 with Project WATER. Funded through a Pennsylvania Growing Greener grant, the project will encourage watershed restoration. Project WATER is a "toolkit" of existing low-cost activities. Through further Growing Greener funds, ICPRB will assist the Watershed Alliance of Adams County, Pa., and the Ridge and Valley Stream Keepers to develop electronic watershed fact sheets displayed and downloaded from a website. These will be especially useful for citizens who want to learn more about their watershed and do more to preserve it. In addition, ICPRB will develop an interactive display of Rock Creek, Marsh Creek, Town Creek, and Sideling Hill Creek subwatersheds in the Potomac basin. The information will be displayed on maps with clickable monitoring points. The type of monitoring completed at each site, the assessment of erosion problems, notes on the site, and hyperlinked pictures for each site will be included.

Several "Pride Day" events will be scheduled this year in the Anacostia watershed. The Anacostia River Business Coalition (ARBC) and ICPRB will organize the events to help clean up trash at designated sites along the Anacostia River. Look for these events on the ICPRB calendar of events at www.potomacriver.org/get_involved/events.

The ICPRB will partner with the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay for a week-long Potomac Sojourn this summer. The educational canoe trip will begin near Cumberland. Check for more details on ICPRB's website.

The ICPRB website continues to evolve as new ICPRB projects arise. The site contains information about the Potomac's living resources, water quality, water supply,

resources for students and teachers, and ways for citizens to stay involved in the watershed's revitalization. The website can be found at www.potomacriver.org.

The ICPRB will continue to work with the citizens, watershed organizations, local governments, and state agencies to improve the Potomac basin in 2004. Updates on ICPRB activities are available on our website, or by calling the commission.

Chairman's Report

by Dr. J. Winston Porter, United States Commissioner and ICPRB Chairman, 2003-2004

I was elected chairman for ICPRB last September, and am excited to hold this position at a time that holds new opportunities for the commission.

I am relatively new to the agency, and was honored by the appointment from President George W. Bush in 2003. My experiences with the commission have been very positive, and I am very enthusiastic about the coming year. I plan on using my past experiences to help me work with my fellow commissioners and staff to bring greater value and visibility to the important efforts in which ICPRB is involved.

That experience includes 10 years as a chemical engineer and executive with Bechtel Corp., managing environmental and water resources studies, and further work in infrastructure planning in Saudi Arabia. In the late 1980s, President Reagan appointed me an assistant administrator at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with national responsibility for Superfund and other waste programs. Currently, I deal with a wide range of environmental issues as the president of the Waste Policy Center in Leesburg, Va. My wife and I also operate a wholesale shade tree nursery.

Several issues in particular loom large for ICPRB in the coming year. Last December, the Supreme Court issued the latest in a string of judgements on the Potomac reaching back to the early history of the nation. The latest ruling granted Virginia (and other states that border the Potomac) the right to withdraw water from the river without seeking a permit from Maryland, which owns the river. Current agreements among the water suppliers in the metropolitan area (with the help of ICPRB) already ensure against shortages, but the ruling could eventually impact water availability in the watershed. The ruling represents an opportunity for ICPRB to work with the basin jurisdictions to create a framework that will allow needs to be met without legal disputes. The commission will encourage cooperative, comprehensive water use plans for the basin, as it has

done for the metropolitan area.

The use of water from the Potomac and related groundwater resources will continue to grow with the region's population.

Some areas of the watershed are experiencing intensive growth and development, particularly in Loudoun County, Va., where I live. As the second-fastest growing county in the nation, Loudoun is something of a laboratory for finding the best ways to lessen the negative impacts of these changes. The ICPRB has begun an assessment of groundwater resources throughout the basin to help the states plan responsibly for development by considering the availability of water and other related resources.

Existing and continuing development impacts basin water quality as well, and ICPRB will continue to assist jurisdictions with research toward assessing water quality and implementing plans to help basin waterways meet designated standards. Involvement in total maximum daily load modeling and planning and performing source water assessments that help protect water quality for drinking are important projects.

The commission also is involved with the basin states' "tributary teams" of volunteers established to implement Chesapeake Bay water quality improvements and has hosted several regional meetings to help citizens and governments to plan for local enhancements within the context of watershed-wide water quality concerns. As the second largest bay tributary, the Potomac is a major focus of the Chesapeake Bay restoration, and ICPRB also represents Potomac basin concerns in several committees and subcommittees



under the federal/state Chesapeake Bay Program.

The commission also is working in smaller shared watersheds, such as the Anacostia, which includes portions of Maryland and Washington, D.C. I have a particular interest in the federal Urban River Restoration Initiative (URRI). Implemented jointly by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency, URRI's eight pilot programs includes one in the Anacostia. The two agencies will combine resources and regulatory authorities to achieve a more-comprehensive restoration than either agency could accomplish separately. The ICPRB is well-suited to work with the agencies to foster coordination between the two ICPRB

member jurisdictions in the watershed.

These efforts represent just a few of the many commission projects during the coming year, more of which are noted elsewhere in this newsletter and on the ICPRB website, www.potomacriver.org. These two outreach resources depict just a portion of the commission's efforts to educate and involve the public in all aspects of the watershed and the many issues facing its future. The commission recognizes that increased public knowledge of and support for programs and projects is crucial to maintaining a high quality of life and the environment in the basin. I look forward to being a part of these efforts, and in fostering the cooperation necessary to protect the Potomac River basin.

Supreme Court Grants Virginia River Rights

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in December that the Commonwealth of Virginia can withdraw water from and construct shoreline improvements along the mainstem Potomac River in accordance with federal common law and riparian rights.

The ruling followed the recommendations of a special master appointed by the court, who determined that Virginia could undertake the actions without requesting a permit from the State of Maryland, which owns the river to the low-tide mark on the Virginia shore. Currently, the Supreme Court ruling will not impact Potomac mainstem water quality or the rate at which the river's waters are being allocated, according to ICPRB staff and water resources officials from Maryland and Virginia

The ruling came after the Fairfax County Water Authority, which supplies water to the metropolitan area's Virginia suburbs, was denied a Maryland permit to extend its intake upstream of Great Falls from the shoreline into the river channel. The intake was completed last year, after a lower-level ruling allowed construction to proceed. Virginia continued the case before the Supreme Court to settle the issue.

Permitting authority for withdrawing water from the Potomac now seems to reside with the individual states. Virginia will now handle requests for water withdrawals from its side of the river using its own permitting rules, which include provisions to protect instream flow. West Virginia (which also shares the mainstem Potomac as a border with Maryland) just passed legislation "To begin the process of characterizing water use in the state," said William Brannon, ICPRB commissioner and deputy director of the state's Division of

Water and Waste Management. "This is a first step," he said.

Although the court action does not raise immediate concerns, growth throughout the basin will increase consumptive demands (water used and not returned to the river), and cooperative management among all the basin states will be important for maximizing the potential of the resource while protecting the river's health.

Most of the time, there is plenty of water in the Potomac to meet all needs. During droughts, the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) and the three major metropolitan water suppliers operate cooperatively, and with reservoir releases meet demand through a unified management structure. The agreements also ensure that enough flow is left in the river downstream of the intakes to protect river ecology from the intakes to Chain Bridge, where tidal effects determine the river level.

"A series of agreements commits the Washington metropolitan area water suppliers to coordinate their Potomac withdrawals and share the river and releases of water from reservoirs during droughts," said ICPRB Executive Director Joseph Hoffman. "Our ICPRB Section for Cooperative Water Supply Operations on the Potomac (CO-OP) manages reservoir releases during droughts based on withdrawal information and short-term demand forecasts from the utilities. Cooperative management requires that each party give up a little independence so that all needs are met while the river is protected from over-use. This working arrangement has been studied internationally, and serves as a good starting point for looking at water resources management for the whole basin," he said.

Help Take out the Trash on April 3

The 16th annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup needs volunteers for its watershed-wide effort from **9:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 3**. The cleanup is led by the the Alice Ferguson Foundation.

Volunteers can choose from more than 130 sites throughout the watershed. Last year, some 3,500 volunteers helped make a difference in beautifying their local waterways. The effort also makes the river environs safer by eliminating trash and debris that can harm birds, animals, fish, and humans. Trash bags, gloves and the comradery of neighbors who share a commitment to cleaner waterways are included.

For more information, contact the foundation at (301) 292-6665, or visit the website at www.PotomacCleanup.org.

The ICPRB has begun a cooperative project with the U.S. Geological Survey to analyze groundwater use within the entire watershed, with a focus on areas where groundwater use is heavy or is threatened. Similar work examining surface water use on a watershed basis could help provide a better understanding of the science and a more-stable, orderly future for water resources in the basin.

Maryland and Virginia are working together to smooth the transition, noted Scott Kudlas, a water policy manager for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Staff from both jurisdiction's environmental agencies and attorney general offices have been talking over transition concerns regarding construction and water permits, and have also discussed federal permitting issues with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kudlas said.

The Fairfax County Water Authority application for the permit to construct the new intake, filed in 1996, did not include a request for increased quantities of water. Moving the intake off the shore would help the water authority by eliminating problems with decaying leaves, aquatic vegetation, silt, wintertime ice buildup, and other issues that created challenges for the shoreline intake. The new intake would help produce drinking water more economically because it would require less treatment. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, which takes water from the Maryland side, has indicated that it plans to seek a similar intake for their facility.

This case is only the latest in a succession of legal disputes over the river that has gone to the Supreme Court. In fact, the history of disputes over legal rights on the Potomac date back to before the



Watching the River Flow

December brought almost enough rain to beat the 1889 precipitation record of 61.33 inches in Washington, D.C., but fell short by only one-half inch by the year's end, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Average annual precipitation for the area is about 40 inches. Other areas of the basin likely surpassed the record.

In December, daily flow of the Potomac River averaged about 22.1 billion gallons per day (bgd), about 278 percent more than the average monthly flow of about 7.9 bgd. Daily extremes for the month ranged from a low of about 8.5 bgd on December 10 to a record daily high of 87 bgd on December 12. The previous record daily maximum on record was 81.4 bgd, set in 1950. Water withdrawn for drinking use in the metropolitan area averaged about 372 million gallons per day (mgd), about four percent more than in December 2002. Freshwater inflow to the Chesapeake Bay averaged about 119 bgd, more than twice the normal December flow. The Potomac contributed about 22 percent of the total.

January flow averaged a bit below normal for the month. Daily flow averaged about 7.6 bgd, about 84 percent of the normal 9.0 bgd. Daily extremes ranged from a low of about 2.8 bgd on January 31 to a high of about 13 bgd on January 7. Water withdrawn for drinking use in the metropolitan area averaged about 394 mgd, about four percent more than in January 2003. Freshwater inflow to the Chesapeake Bay averaged about 60.9 bgd, about six percent higher than the normal January flow to the bay. The Potomac contributed about 16 percent of the total.

nation's founding. Hopefully, future efforts at cooperative management of the river can bring the long string of expensive court battles to an end. "It's a lot easier to get the regions' drinking water out of the river through cooperation than out of the courthouse," noted ICPRB Executive Director Joe Hoffman.

ICPRB Cosponsors 2004 Potomac River Sojourn

The Potomac Sojourn has become a river tradition that brings Potomac enthusiasts together to enjoy nature and build lasting friendships. The public is invited to join ICPRB, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and several partner organizations, on the canoe/kayak trip from **Cumberland, Md., to Williamsport, Md., from July 9-17**. Along the route, participants will get glimpses of bald eagles along the forested banks, take in the fresh air, and enjoy a relaxing paddle down the nation's river.

Each day, speakers from various organizations will hold discussions about the resources of the Potomac. The river offers many opportunities for enthusiasts to learn hands-on about trees, birds, fish, water quality, and other related topics in a small group setting. In past years, the sojourn has brought together children, teenagers, and adults to treasure this precious resource. Sojourners can paddle the whole route, or join in for just a day or two.

If you would like to participate in this year's sojourn, contact Steve Saari at 301.984.1908 x. 103 or via email at ssaari@icprb.org. Trip details will be posted on the ICPRB website at www.potomacriver.org.



Potomac Basin

REPORTER

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C&O Canal Through-Hike Celebrates 50th Anniversary

In the early 1950s, the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal was slated to become a major roadway in Maryland. Justice William O. Douglas recognized the significance of the C&O Canal to the Washington area, and in 1954, led a group of natural resources visionaries and a pool of journalists down the entire length of the towpath to experience its scenic wonders. Through Douglas' dedication, the C&O Canal and towpath became scenic park land along the Potomac River for future generations to enjoy. This year marks the 50th anniversary of that through-hike.

The C&O Canal Association invites the public to honor Justice Douglas by hiking from Cumberland, Md. to Georgetown in Washington, D.C. The hike will allow an exploration with like-minded recreation stewards and serve as a model for restoring other natural treasures. Hikers can join for a day or the whole hike, beginning with an opening banquet in Cumberland on April 17 and hiking into Georgetown on May 1. For more information, contact Barbara Sheridan at (703) 306-6549 or via email at barbara.sheridan@gsa.gov.

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